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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001572

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DEPT FOR D, AF/FO, AF/SPG, AF/RSA, AND IO

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PINR](#) [CD](#) [ER](#) [AU](#) [UN](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: HAMRA AL-SHEIKH INCIDENT: GNU SEEKS CONDEMNATION

Classified By: P/E Chief E. Whitaker, Reason: Section 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: A July 3 attack on Hamra al-Sheikh, North Kordofan State, by the JEM resulted in the deaths of at least 12 individuals and significant property damage. The Sudanese Armed Forces repulsed the attack with helicopter gunships and Antonov bombers. The Sudanese Government believes the incident involves Chad and Eritrea; it has requested statements of condemnation for what it regards to be a threat to the DPA. The MFA has summoned embassy officials and filed complaints with the UNSC, African Union, and Arab league. Presidential Advisor Magzoub al-Khalifa also raised this matter in strong terms with CDA Hume. Post recommends that press guidance be developed. End summary.

Details on JEM Attack on Hamra al-Sheikh

12. (C) On the morning of July 3, Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) forces attacked the North Kordofan town of Hamra al-Sheikh. The town, roughly 400 kilometers northwest of Khartoum near the North Darfur) North Kordofan border, is a customs checkpoint situated on a major trading route from Libya to Khartoum. The attack, which involved dozens of rebels and roughly 50 vehicles, some of which served to block off the town, resulted in the deaths of between 12-50 individuals and significant property damage. An account indicates the fatalities during the day-long attack included eight police officers, two security officials, and two women. The attack gave interlocutors the impression of being well planned, and possibly supported by linkages through Chad. The National Redemption Front, a grouping of non-signatories to the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA), claimed credit subsequently for the attack. Within hours, the Sudanese Armed Forces repulsed the raid and forcing the rebels to flee the town using helicopter gunships (perhaps Mi-24s) and Antonov bombers from El Fasher, with ground support from El Obeid. (Note: According to Reuters, SLA field commander Adam Ali Shogar stated that the rebels sought to continue to Khartoum. Khartoum-based Arabic daily newspaper Al-Sahafa quoted an Abubkr Hamid, an NRF field commander, as stating his forces would withdraw from the town, with one group heading toward Khartoum and another north. Finally, AP states that JEM spokesman Ahmed Hussein told Al-Jazeera by telephone from London that the attack was defensive in nature, and followed previous incidents in Darfur. End note.)

GNU Summons Embassy Reps, Seeks Condemnation of Attack

13. (U) On July 4, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) issued a press release describing the attack and referring to it as a threat to the DPA. The release also called on the international community to condemn the attack.

¶4. (C) On July 5, the MFA summoned representatives from the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, Libya, Nigeria, and the African Union to advise them of the incident and the seriousness with which the Government regarded it as a threat to the DPA. Acting Director of Americas Magdy al-Mafuddal told Pol/Econ Counselor that the MFA had also summoned the Eritrean Charge, and had filed complaints with the UN Security Council and the African Union regarding the incident. It also relayed an advisory notice to the Arab League on the matter. Magdy requested the U.S. Government issue a statement condemning the attack, and advised that the MFA had solicited statements from other interlocutors. He said that dialogue was the only path to peace, and said the attack was a message to the Government and the international community that the Minni Minawi SLM faction was not the only force present.

¶5. (U) In an account carried by Sudan Vision Daily, a pro-government newspaper and online news service, Minister of Justice Mohamed Ali Al-Mardi stated that the government is investigating the incident and had provided names of suspected attackers to Interpol for potential extradition.

Al-Khalifa: JEM Attacked Kordofan; Darfur "Closed Off"

¶6. (C) In a separate meeting on July 5, Presidential Advisor Magzoub al-Khalifa told CDA Hume that the JEM had declared responsibility for the attack. The JEM had intentionally struck in Kordofan, because the SAF had worked closely with Minawi's faction of the SLA to &close off8 Darfur. The JEM had tried similar attacks several times before in Darfur, but had failed, Magzoub added.

¶7. (C) According to Magzoub, the JEM force had moved from an

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area near the Libya-Chad-Sudan border through Northern State and around North Darfur, entering Kordofan from the north. At one point it appeared it might attack Dongola, in Northern State on the Nile, but it was too well defended. In the end, they chose Hamra al-Sheikh because it was a customs post on the desert route between Khartoum and Libya. &They wanted to declare their position.8

Al-Khalifa: Chad and Eritrea Involved in Attack

¶8. (C) The attack was supported by Chad, Magzoub believed, with the support of Eritrea. It came despite what Magzoub described as a &good meeting8 between President Bashir and Chad,s President Idriss Deby at the AU Summit in Banjul, and a recent visit by Eritrean President Isaias to Khartoum. &The Eritreans are doing many contradictory things simultaneously,8 Magzoub observed.

International Community Urged to Condemn Attack

¶9. (C) The international community should not keep silent about the attack, Magzoub urged. He considered it to be terrorism, and had said as much during an interview with Al Jazeera. He was also concerned that the JEM may attempt to find new recruits from dissatisfied tribes in Kordofan. &It could be a serious problem,8 he noted. The attack was especially counterproductive because the past month had been the most peaceful period in Sudan since the signing of the CPA in January 2005. &The JEM must not gain politically or militarily from this attack,8 he emphasized.

HUME